

## About Cemeteries

Lovely Shrines or Ghost Graveyards?  
Which Shall It Be?

SOME PEOPLE like their history served well done by technical experts. I like mine served raw. Now, raw vegetables are best picked fresh from the garden and eaten right then and there with a little of the dirt left on. The same is true of history.

The chief sources of the history of any people are their heartbeats, their altars, and their graves. These are found not necessarily along the main thoroughfares connecting the modern community centers, but rather along the by-ways, the lanes, out in the brush and sticks, and places little frequented by the general public.

During the month of August, I took time to secure some firsthand information on the history of Johnson county. I visited homes, churches and graveyards. I speculated particularly in the latter. So far I have located 27 cemeteries in Johnson county. I have personally visited 18 of them. I intend to see the rest soon.

G. M. LUDWIG During these experiences I was reminded of Dr. Clark D. Lamberton who tried to teach me early Christian literature at Western Reserve university. Now, when Doctor Lamberton was working on his doctorate at Princeton university, he did not secure his information from dusty library stacks. He made a special trip to Rome and visited the catacombs.

This intricate system of tunnels and underground rooms extends all around Rome. (See Wallace in his book "The Catacombs of Rome.") They were originally constructed and used by the early Christians mainly for three purposes—to hide from persecutors, to worship, and to bury their dead. After Christianity was accepted officially, these catacombs were abandoned by the Christians but were from time to time visited by robbers and pillagers. Eventually these underground halls became more or less filled with debris and were apparently forgotten.

In modern times archaeologists have reopened many miles of these ancient tunnels to study the inscriptions and epitaphs along the sides of the walls where the dead were buried as well as the amazing display of paintings many of which are remarkably well preserved to this day. Doctor Lamberton wrote his thesis on the subject, "The Roman St. John's Gospel in Early Roman Catacomb Paintings."

Like all normal students, we often succeeded in detracting the professor from his main lectures and get him to tell of his experiences while hurrying away among this underground litter. He always assured us that a person soon becomes perfectly acclimated to his new environment and soon comes to regulate while conducting the remains of a lost people. "In fact," he assured us, "you will even lie down right in the midst of a pile of human bones to gaze at some interesting paintings on the ceiling."

My experience during my recent pilgrimages was somewhat like his. Reading inscriptions and epitaphs on the tombstones of some of the old cemeteries of Johnson county is like many other jobs. The first day is the hardest and I dare say the most tiring. Especially is this true if you have to crawl along on hands and feet through weeds and brush, stumble over groundhog holes deep enough, it seems, to reveal a coffin if there still were a coffin, and then scratch away the dirt from a tombstone half buried in the ground or else knocked entirely over.

Fortunately for my purpose some of these ghost graveyards were fenced out. The hogs had killed the weeds and brush, had leveled off the graves, and had robbed the tombstones bright and shiny as the inscription could be read rather easily. Some of these were inscriptions of war veterans, but that's all right. History is an interesting species of animals. We enlarge our returning heroes, immortalize their wounds, deck their coffins with carpets of flowers, and finally diminish any further obligation by erecting a marker, which apparently in some cases, serves well as a scratching post for hogs. HOW SOON WE FORGET!

Such descriptions of Johnson county cemeteries are the exception, however, and not the rule. Most of these silent but realistic archives of the past history of a community are in excellent condition. Happy, beyond expression, was I to discover, in most instances, very legible evidence of thoughtfulness and deep reverence in behalf of the departed. A beautiful little wreath, freshly placed on a grave, told the story that somebody had remembered. In one instance a person came to visit a beautiful tomb to keep it blooming, a beautiful token of devotion to a lost mother.

The Grant cemetery in Sharon township was in fine condition. So also were the Unity cemetery in Union township, the Swank cemetery in Fremont township, and the Riley cemetery in Jefferson township. These were just a few of the many that showed fine care and speak well of a community interest, even though, in some cases, these communities no longer revolved around a flourishing old large church.

I was particularly interested in a little cemetery, just southeast of Lone Tree where the Evanses and Edmondes are buried. This cemetery is set in from the main road, a situation quite common with early cemeteries and often a contributing factor to their abandonment. In this case, however, the long approach was cleaned out and well fenced and the cemetery was regularly moved with the lawn mower. In many cases where the cemetery treasury would not permit a regular mowing with the lawn mower, a definite and organized program was maintained, nevertheless, to keep the burial ground respectable and attractive. Take for instance the Hale cemetery in Monroe township. The caretakers were busy the very day we visited this burial ground and it looked remarkably clean and well kept even though the lawn mower was not regularly used.

The Amish and Mennonite cemeteries, with one exception, are also well preserved. Never showing the deterioration represented in elaborate tombstones, as for instance in the Anderson at Berthier, the Lone Tree, or the St. Peter's and St. Paul's in Cedar township, these cemeteries, nevertheless, are attractive because of their simplicity, order, and marks of substantiality.

Three cemeteries particularly attracted my attention. One of these is the North Liberty cemetery which always looks fine. This is located up on a hill overlooking the North Bend valley. Anyone desiring a spot from which to observe the toils of the generations still living and unborn should find success on this lookout.

If you like a cemetery that suggests quiet and repose you might visit the Pleasant Hill cemetery at Amish. This cemetery, like that at North Liberty, is in excellent condition.

As a first choice, I must select the Blain cemetery, a short distance southwest of Des Moines. This old little burial place is nestled securely in the center of native timber with only the north front exposed. As I first caught sight of this cool little land, segregated from the cares and the hurry of modern life, I felt overcome with a deep feeling of peace and contentment. The caretaker, Mr. Wm. Stephenson, must be a master gardener. The velvety green turf, the beautiful flower beds, the neatly trimmed shrubbery, the excellent

## Johnson County

FROST BEFORE  
OCT. 1 WOULD  
HURT 60 PCT.

Only 23 Per Cent  
Would Be Damaged  
By Oct. 15 Freeze

Johnson county farmers

are of the opinion that if we have a killing frost before October 1 60 per cent of the corn would be injured, and if the frost date was October 15 only 23 per cent would be damaged. This information was secured from a survey taken this week by Emmett C. Gardner, county extension director.

The survey also revealed the facts regarding the present corn shortage for feeding. The average farmer who assisted in the survey stated that he would have on his farm only 343 bushels of old corn on October 1. However, his oats and hay crops are above last year. He threshed and combined 1,764 bushels of oats as compared to 851 bushels last year. He also harvested 53 tons of hay compared to 44 tons last year, according to the survey.

Farmers reported in the survey that they planned to market their spring pigs at a weight of 236 pounds. About half reported they will produce about the same number of fall pigs as usual but will sell them at a lighter weight. One-half said they planned to feed the usual number of feeder cattle. One-fourth expected to increase the feeding of cattle over last year and one-fourth was waiting to see what happened to the corn crop before making their plans regarding the feeding of beef cattle.

In making the survey a questionnaire was sent to 87 farmers located in every township in the county. The farms surveyed had from 80 acres to 1,035 acres

condition of the surrounding fence, all add so wonderfully to the natural setting, so that the most meticulous critic would have to pronounce his work flawless. Visit this beautiful shrine some time towards the evening when the shadows lengthen and become softer, or later still when.

"They are dying in the West  
Heaven is touching earth with rest."

But what about these ghost graveyards? Do not these also contain graves of men, women, and children, of a bygone age, that too are honorable and worthy? Many of these people had little money, but the wealth that now is Johnson county's was secured by the sacrifice and suffering and death of people just like them. Shall we desecrate their memory by our pitiful indifference? Has Iowa land, first conquered and developed by their sweat and toil, now become as valuable that we can no longer afford to set aside these few sacred spots as a memorial to those instrumental in giving it its present value? Why not restore these old burial places as historical shrines. Or shall we tear down what dilapidated fences remain, commit the crumbling blockstones to the pillagers, and turn out our stock to roam unrestrained over their sacred dust?



BY KNOX CRAIG  
Associated Press Staff Writer

SURPLUS FARM LAND

Anyone interested in some of the new looking farm tracts surrounding the ordnance plants at Des Moines and Burlington, which were taken over and fenced by the government since the start of the war will have to talk with Uncle Sam. Defense plant corporation is now holding the Des Moines plant. The entire property may be sold as a unit, or it may be broken up in parcels so a farmer could buy and without having to purchase an ordnance plant. It was understood the war department was still seriously considering holding the Burlington plant as a reserve.

BEAN HARVEST

Iowa will soon start harvesting its second largest soybean harvest since the start of the war. Predictions now are that it will equal last year's record crop of 2,129,000 acres which yielded some 40,000,000 bushels. Prior to 1945 Iowa raised very few soybeans. A heavy harvest is expected especially in the north-central area.

LINE SPREADING

If early 1945 figures indicate a trend, Iowa farmers will at least equal the more than 2,000,000 tons of lime they spread on their farms last year. Farmers throughout the state are busy now spreading lime. As of July 26 of this year, 184,131 tons of lime had been delivered through AAA contracts as compared to 153,486 last year. Much of the material is spread during the latter part of the year with November, or an average of 340 acres.

FACE CORN SHORTAGE

Farmers in Johnson county are having a tough time buying corn for their feeding operations, according to Emmett C. Gardner, county extension director. Some farmers producing several hundred head of hogs and several thousand turkeys can hardly find corn enough anywhere that can be bought to feed their livestock. As a result, some livestock will be sold light and many will cut down on the number of sows bred this fall for spring farrow. When corn is located in or out of the county the price the feeder is required to pay varies as much as 20 cents per bushel.